Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas

CHAPTER XII

Casper Real
Kerr County

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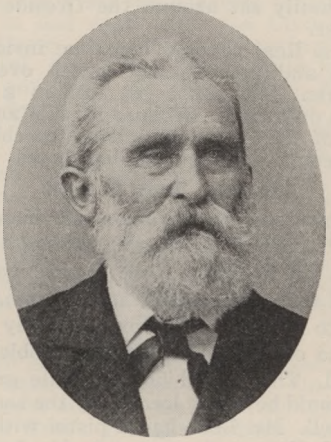
CASPER REAL, born in the famous city of Dusseldorff on the Rhine in Germany, had served in the German army with the present Kaiser's grandfather, and was 24 years old when he came to America in 1849. He brought with him his mother and younger brother, Adolph, whom he carefully looked after for a number of years. They landed at old Indianola and made the trip overland to New Braunfels. After a short stop there with friends and relatives they located in San Antonio. Casper had been trained as a farmer in the old country, but he engaged in the carpenter trade at San Antonio for the following three years while studying the new country and learning to speak the English language.

Emelie Schreiner was born in a house 1,500 years old at Riquewhr near Strausberg in Alsace-Lorraine in 1836. Her father, Dr. Gustave Schreiner, was a distinguished dentist. She had been confirmed in the Lutheran church when 14 years old and had the best educational advantages of that time. Her home was comfortable. She was sweet, timid, and charming. Having been nurtured in a cultured environment there was probably very little indication of the quiet strength and courage which she was to manifest later as a pioneer wife and mother. Her parents died shortly after their arrival in San Antonio.



CASPER REAL
(Picture taken shortly before his death)

In 1853, Emelie Schreiner and Casper Real were married and moved to a ranch on Martinez Creek about ten miles from San Antonio, between the Cibolo and the Salado and near the present community of Converse. The sheep and cattle business did not prosper because of the poor market and a dearth of money. The Reals left twice because of the devastating drouths. Water had to be hauled six miles. During the severe drouth of 1857 they moved to Kerr county. The continuous supply of flowing waters of the spring-fed Turtle Creek was the main attraction.

Three families—Casper Real, Joseph Stapper, and August Leek—bought a tract of 320 acres of land from a land agent who neglected to impress upon them the danger from the marauding Indians who made, at least, monthly forays during the light of the moon.

Cattle and sheep raising, combined with farming were the principal sources of income. Casper Real brought 800 head of sheep with him. This was the largest band brought into that section of the country up to that time. A herder was kept to protect the sheep from the lobo wolf. But the sheep business was not so successful because the sage grass was not nourishing. It was tall and thin and, then too, the Indians burned it. These sheep were later taken back to the Martinez. When the grass was better, Mr. Real bought sheep that had been raised in the hill country. From them he developed probably the largest flocks in that section of the State.

In the meantime, camp for the three families had been pitched on Turtle Creek which flows through the picturesque hill country. A log house was built for the Real family. It was chinked with chiseled rocks and plastered with adobe.

The long, big room, with a big front porch, and the two small side rooms on each end of the porch were warm and were equipped with the limited conveniences of that pioneer period. The "big room" contained one window, a roughly hewn cypress floor, and a big homey fireplace with two iron hooks on which to hang cooking vessels when needed. A "Dreifusze," or three-legged stand was kept usually on the hearth near the side on which to put iron pots for boil-

At the left—Mrs. Casper Real (center) and her two daughters, Mrs. Matilda Ingenhuitt, left, and Mrs. Emma Stieler. The six sons of Mr. and Mrs. Casper Real. From left to right—Walter. Albert. Arthur. Julius. Robert and Charlie.

ing food. Bread was baked in a "skillet and lid."

Mrs. Real frequently baked cookies for the children at Christmas in this skillet, or "Dutch Oven" as it is called now. One of the small rooms at the end of the porch became the real kitchen as soon as it was possible for a stove to be bought. The other small room was used for a bedroom. Each of these small rooms had only one window of two panes. The kitchen, for several years had only a dirt floor.

Mrs. Real was busy early and late maintaining a home for her ever-growing family with the limited conveniences available. Mr. Real had brought with him from Germany tools that enabled him to make many things that added to their comfort. He made a cradle of mesquite wood; bedsteads with slats nailed onto the sides; a dining table and benches. The family slept on shuck and cotton mattresses. Feather beds were used for covers. Mr. Real made a work bench of split logs, two and one half feet high. He used a broad axe brought from Germany to split the log. This bench is still at the old place and is prized by members of the family. They had cowhide-bottom chairs and probably two rockers. Mrs. Real was small in stature and very large, so she had the legs of her chair cut off so it would be convenient to reach potatoes in a pan on the floor while peeling them.

The first lights were brass cans filled with tallow, containing a wick that could be "screwed higher" as needed. Later tallow candles were used; then lanterns became available. Mrs. Real thought it was a great day when lamps could be bought. In addition to her other numerous duties, she knitted stockings for her family. She usually did this at night as the family sat around the fireside after supper.

Mrs. Real devoted her time inside the home and kept hourly watch over the children. She could get lost in a little while outdoors. Because of this and the fear of the Indians she kept the children in "seeing distance" of her home.

Indians Were Feared

When one of the men left home she never knew what might happen to her home or to him. One foggy morning Mr. Leek, a very cool, steady man, went out to look for the oxen. They were turned out at night, always hobbled and belled. They could hobble while grazing and could be easily located by the sound of the bell. Mr. Leek had a pistol with him. The Indians were more afraid of a rifle than a pistol. Through the heavy fog he saw some men who gave the white man's sign. He thought they were Rangers. They started toward him yelling and shooting at him from both sides. But the fog was so heavy that their aims were poor. They chased him for about one-half mile. Mr. Leek, walking backwards and holding his pistol in front of him, stumbled. One of the Indians stooped over him, intending to get his scalp, but Mr. Leek shot him. The other Indians followed him until he was near the house. Two of the Schreiner boys hearing the shots went to meet him. He was so excited he started to shoot them until they yelled, "Don't shoot us. We are your friends."

When he got to the house he fell on the bed saying, "I am shot." But he had not been hurt.

The Stapper and Leek families left about one year after this incident.

Captain Charles Schreiner, Mrs. Real's brother, came to that section. Casper Real and Captain Schreiner were real frontiersmen and could not easily be driven out. In 1869, Captain Schreiner moved to Kerrville and opened a general merchandise store. This became the foundation for the great mercantile interests known as "Schreiner's" today.

Casper Real was not only one of the early settlers of the county, but was an important figure in every good undertaking as long as he lived. He was in every way a man in advance of his time. On his land he built one of the first fences in that county. He was among the first to introduce sheep raising west of Bexar county. At one time he had under his control about 40,000 acres and at times his livestock numbered 1,500 head of cattle and 6,000 head of sheep. He was the largest sheepman in that part of the country.

Mr. Real had become a naturalized citizen before the Civil War. Having taken the oath of allegiance to the Union, and being opposed to slavery, he was a Union sympathizer. He did not enter the army but remained at home to take care of the women and children. A number of officials of the Confederate Army stationed in that section of the State were his personal friends. Mrs. Charles Schreiner spent much of her time in the

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Real home, while her husband served in the army.

Mr. Real was a man of widely extended interests. He held the office of county tax assessor and tax collector for many years. There was not a bank in the county at the time, so he made the trip to Austin horseback, taking the tax rolls and money in saddle bags. He tried to leave home secretly. He had one man to go with him to Boerne. Here he would be joined by the tax collector of Kendall county. These two were usually joined en route by the tax collectors at New Braunfels and San Marcos. The four would arrive at the State Capitol on tired horses and bulging saddle bags. They were not afraid of being robbed of the money but they were afraid of their horses being stolen.

Mr. Real was internal revenue collector for eight years. From 1868 to 1875 he was hide and cattle inspector. As such he had to inspect all of the cattle that passed through Kerr county. Men who came into the county to buy cattle brought bags of money—gold. They would lay these bags down most any where without any fear of the money being stolen.

During the "70's" when the cattle were being driven to the northern markets, horse thieves were worse than the Indians. Mr. Real took the lead in organizing a group for the purpose of exterminating them. Although the citizens were taking the law into their own hands, it was generally understood that this organization had the approval of the authorities in Austin. This group was so effective that the county got rid of both the horse thieves and the Indians.

"But father's greatest work was his family," the children, from whom this story was obtained, unanimously agree. "When he and our mother could rear six husky, strong boys in such a country, with such an environment, with every inducement and often inclined to get into mischief and kept them straight and give them some sort of education—in other words made men of them in spite of themselves—they did as great a piece of work as one man and woman could do."

They could compromise with Mrs. Real when they got into mischief but not with Mr. Real.

Although she was a gentle, retiring soul she seemed always to have plenty of inward grace and strength necessary to meet each problem. While Mr. Real's great responsibilities and dangers with which he had to cope made him firm and sometimes unyielding he and Mrs. Real were real partners in homemaking. He did all he could to shield her from unnecessary hardships.

The Reals did not consider that times were so bad until after the Civil War. Wild game—bear, deer, and turkey were plentiful. A calf or a hog could be butchered anytime. Potatoes, bush beans, yard beans and later tomatoes were raised. They were not so fond of the tomatoes. They had plenty of milk, butter and cornbread, and molasses after the war. Corn had to be taken in an ox wagon to a grist mill at Bandera, 18 miles away. It was difficult to obtain coffee. Parched rye, acorns and corn were ground and used as a substitute. Rye was preferable.

Privations of War

Some of the children did not see flour until after the war. During the war they could not sell wool. In 1865 Adolph, Casper Real's younger brother, went to New York to sell their clip. He brought back twelve sewing machines, some flour and coffee. The children had been promised "biscuits." Their disappointment can be imagined when the barrel of flour was opened and it was black and could not be used. The sack of coffee was gone. Mr. Real questioned the negro who had been in charge of the freight wagon from Indianola. The negro declared it had been loaded with the other supplies. They went back over the road and found it had fallen off.

Mr. Real bought the first barrel of apples, sauerkraut, and Irish potatoes shipped to Kerrville from St. Louis. The barrel of apples was opened at the store and divided with friends.

"We worked like Turks and had a good appetite," assert the children. "Mother did not have germs, bacteria, or vitamins to worry about."

Mrs. Real was an excellent cook and served her family many rare French and German dishes.

Mr. Real went to San Antonio about twice a year to see about the sheep. He brought toys home for the children in saddle bags. One time he brought home a dozen big, red apples. Most of the children did not care for them. They sold them for five cents each to the oldest brother, Walter, who was at home from San Antonio where he was attending school.

"We enjoyed a fifty-cent toy more than children of today enjoy fifty dollars worth of toys," the children state.

One of the toys they remember was a "monkey on a string." Albert received that and the children envied him. He had peeped through a crack the night before watching his father and mother arrange toys for Santa Claus. He saw his father stretch out a beautiful roach comb he had gotten for Emma, the oldest daughter, to show Mrs. Real. The next morning Albert stretched it out and broke it. Everybody was heart broken.

Fishing was great sport. The children would bring in so many fish that Mrs. Real would throw up her hands and say "No more fish."

The children played with bows and arrows and went swimming in the river. One time a cow came along and chewed Arthur's beautiful red stripped pants made of bed ticking. These pants were the envy of all the boys. They saw the cow just as she swallowed the last leg of them. They ran after her, but the pants were ruined. They got a scolding for not taking better care of the pants, and the cattle.

Some of the boys were pretty good swimmers before Mrs. Real knew it. She was always miserable when they were out of her sight. One night the Indians had come close enough to the house to steal potatoes and corn from the garden nearby. They dropped a few potatoes in the lane. The next morning as the children drove the cattle to the pasture they picked up some of them and ate them. Mrs. Real was frantic because she was afraid the Indians might have poisoned them.

For a while the nearest physician was in San Antonio. Mr. Real would ride horseback there to get medicine and advice about ailing members of the family.

Mrs. Real's hardest time would be when her husband would be away, and he was away so much. When the Indians were raiding they frequently gave the calls of the lobo wolf, thinking they could fool the settlers. They could keep up with each other and get together by day break. But the Real children say that they could nearly always recognize the Indian calls. One night Mrs. Real and Mrs. Schreiner were alone with their children, except for an old man, who was deaf. Hearing the Indian calls, imitating the lobo, they tried to get him to do something. But, he went upstairs and went to sleep. They turned out the lights, barred the door with the chairs and placed the ax by it. They went from bed to bed, feeling the children to be sure they were all there.

The dangers and hard times were interspersed with good times. There were

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bowling alleys, singing societies, dances, enjoyed alike by the young and old folks. Christmas and the Fouth of July were always occasions for great celebration.

One time Mr. and Mrs. Real and their daughter Emma had attended a Fourth of July celebration at Comfort, eighteen miles away. Just about dark, during the trip home, the oxen gave every appearance of being uneasy.

"There are a bunch of horses! and I saw a man!" said Mrs. Real to her husband in a low voice. "He is an Indian!"

He was standing perfectly still. They did not know how many other might be near. Mr. Real, who had been walking by the ox wagon, grasped his pistol and got into the wagon. Mrs. Real lay down in the bottom. But they were not bothered. They had left the other children in care of a hired man. Upon their arrival home Mr. and Mrs. Real could not find Robert, one of the children. They were frightened but he was finally found asleep in the back yard. This was forbidden.

Mrs. Real and her daughters were excellent seamstresses. Goods were bought by the bolt and dyed with walnut leaves and hickory. Hats were made of the same material. During the early days the sewing was done by hand. Mr. Real secured one of the twelve sewing machines, brought from New York by Adolph Real.

Schooling of Children

As the children reached school age, Mr. and Mrs. Real taught them awhile. The oldest boy, Walter, received some training in music and literary work from an officer at Camp Verdi. Later this officer taught the Real children in the home. Nearly all of the children at one time or other went away to school. Albert, Arthur, and Julius attended Southwestern University at Georgetown, one year each, for three consecutive years; several of the children received training in music.

The Reals were fond of music. Mr. Real became the first president of the Texas Saengerbund, a singing society organized in 1870. He served as president fifteen years. His son, Julius, generally known as "Senator Real" is now president and has served as long. The members of this society are drawn from German families in probably ten counties in and near the hill country. Once a year there is a festival lasting two days. The program is made up of old songs from Germany and old American songs. It is popularly known as the "Sing Fest" and musically is one of the big events of Southwest Texas.

Arthur Real, one of the sons, was born in the Real home on Turtle Creek. His son, Casper, still lives there, and his daughter Jeannette was also born there.

Mr. Real died there in 1893 at the age of seventy. Mrs. Real lived about twenty years longer and died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Emma Stieler, in Comfort.

As the children grew older they enjoyed the comforts and some of the luxuries of life. Frequently they drove to San Antonio to attend the opera. After Mr. Real's death, Mrs. Real traveled quite a bit with her son, Arthur Real, and his wife. They made one trip to her old home at Riquewhr in Alsace-Lorraine. Apparently she never regretted the early struggles in a new country. She felt that her children had better opportunities in the new world.

Mrs. Real was modest, yet she was proud of her children. She saw them line up with every good move for the development of the country. Prominent ranchmen—in both sheep and cattle—they held political offices, such as county commissioners and county judges of Kerr county, and one son, Julius, a staunch Republican, serving a Democratic district as State Senator for 12 years. Real county is named for him. This is only a small part of their record as leading citizens of that section of the State. Both of the daughters married ranchmen and their influence as homemakers was and is recognized as was that of their mother's.

"She was a wonderful mother," assert her daughters-in-law.

"Father did more for Kerr county than his six sons," is the unanimous decision of the sons.

There were eight children in the family. Walter, a rancher, living near Kerrville; Emma, deceased, who was the wife of Herman Stieler, of Comfort; Albert, a rancher; Arthur who lives near San Antonio; Julius, lives on a ranch near Kerrville; Robert, deceased, a rancher who lived near Mountain Home in Kerr county; Matilda, wife of Hubert Ingenhuitt, lives in New York City; and Charles, a rancher, but in the department of Internal Revenue, Austin, at present.

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